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Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Provisional agenda and annotations

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Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure and past practice, the Statistical Commission should elect, at its first meeting, a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur to serve from the beginning of the thirtieth session of the Commission to the beginning of the thirty-first session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

The items on the provisional agenda and the corresponding documentation were considered by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session (New York, 10–14 February 1997)[1] and approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1997/219. The Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, at its nineteenth session (New York, 10–12 February 1998), reviewed the provisional agenda and documentation and made a number of decisions which are reflected in the present provisional agenda and documentation (see E/CN.3/1999/20, paras. 36 and 37). A proposed schedule of discussion has been made available to the Commission. The Commission should adopt an agenda and schedule of discussion for the session.

Documentation

Provisional agenda and annotations (E/CN.3/1999/1)

Note by the Secretariat on the organization of the work of the session (E/CN.3/1999/L.1)

Note by the Secretariat on the state of preparation of documentation for the session (E/CN.3/1999/L.2)

3. Economic statistics

(a) National accounts

The Commission will have before it the report of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA), containing proposals for a continuous updating mechanism for the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA), including a typology of amendments with increased substantive complexity. The first two concrete proposals for updating the 1993 SNA are presented to the Commission, one relating to the treatment of financial derivatives and another to the functional classifications; the latter is based on the draft classifications of expenditure according to purpose,[2] which are before the Commission for final review. The report also provides the integrated presentation of the work programme of ISWGNA in support of SNA implementation, highlighting recent accomplishments and reviewing proposed priority areas for actions. The Commission is requested to (a) express its views regarding the proposed mechanism for updating the 1993 SNA, and the two proposals for updating the 1993 SNA with regard to financial derivatives and functional classifications; (b) approve for publication the draft classifications of expenditure according to purpose; and (c) identify any priority areas that members of ISWGNA should pay special attention to in support of the implementation of the 1993 SNA.

The Commission will also have before it a report on the milestone assessment for implementation of the 1993 SNA by member States, including a short introductory note on how the milestones have been formulated and accepted by the Commission for monitoring progress in the implementation of the 1993 SNA. The assessment method based on the international database of the United Nations Statistics Division is explained. Qualifying notes contributed by the regional commissions complement the tables presenting the country

assessments by regions. A brief analysis of the assessment and the changes therein over the past two years are also included. The Commission is requested to (a) express its views regarding the milestone assessment and its use; and (b) suggest, if considered necessary, improvements in the assessment method.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (E/CN.3/1999/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on milestone assessment of the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 by member States (E/CN.3/1999/3)

Draft classifications of expenditure according to purpose: draft classification of the functions of government (COFOG); draft classification of individual consumption according to purpose (COICOP); draft classification of the purposes of non-profit institutions serving households (COPNI); draft classification of the outlays of producers according to purpose (COPP) (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/84)

(b) International trade statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics, which will review the work accomplished by the Task Force in response to the decisions made by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session,[3] and by the Working Group at its nineteenth session (see E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 10), as well as other activities that the Task Force has undertaken. The Commission will also have before it a supplementary report analysing the issue of rationalizing the Commodity Trade Statistics Database (Comtrade) of the United Nations Statistics Division and responding to the specific requests made by the Working Group at its nineteenth session (see E/CN.3/1999/20, para.10).

The Commission is requested to respond to the Secretariat's proposals that (a) Comtrade be maintained in its present form and content for the immediate future; (b) in the short term, the Division produce a data set of merchandise trade according to the Central Product Classification (CPC) (goods part) on diskette for reviewing that classification and its use; and (c) in the longer term, the Division investigate the ways in which trade statistics according to CPC (and the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Goods and Services (ISIC)) could be made available if a sufficient need for that data were to be established. The Commission is also requested to approve the arrangements for collaboration on data collection and processing among the international organizations set out in the report of the Task Force.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/4 and Add.1)

(c) Service statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services, summarizing the work of the Task Force on the proposed manual on statistics of international trade in services. The manual is expected to take into consideration the four modes of supply as defined in the General Agreement on Trade in Services. The Commission is requested to respond to the strategy laid out in the report for the completion of the draft manual.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (E/CN.3/1999/5)

(d) Finance statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics, summarizing the terms of reference of the Task Force and its meetings held in 1998, as well as the initiatives launched by the Task Force to improve collaboration in the two areas identified to be of special interest: international reserves and external debt. The Commission is requested to express its views on the initiatives taken by the Task Force.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/6)

(e) Other economic statistics

The Commission will have before it a document presenting reports by the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics, the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, the Expert Group on Capital Stock Statistics, the Expert Group on Intangibles, the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes, the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation, and the Round Table on Business Survey Frames. In order to facilitate the work of the Commission a common presentation format has been applied, where relevant and possible, covering the following categories: purpose of the group; year organized; participants; meetings; topics considered; products; planned activities; expected future products; and point of contact. The Commission is requested to review whether the mandate of the various groups is appropriately focused and the objectives are clear and attainable. Furthermore, the Commission may wish to comment on current programmes and proposals for future work. In addition, the Commission will have before it a report by the recently established Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics. The Commission may wish to endorse the work of this Working Group.

The Commission will have before it the report of a consultant on the evaluation of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), addressing concerns about the implementation of the Programme, the uses of its results and the credibility of purchasing power parity estimates. The report was prepared under the sponsorship of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations in response to the Commission's request at its twenty-ninth session.[4] The main findings of the consultant are presented in an executive summary, followed by the full report, including the detailed evaluation of ICP. The evaluation is supplemented by the consultant's recommendations concerning organization, technical aspects, timeliness, data dissemination and resource implications of the programme. The Commission is requested to comment on the recommendations put forward by the consultant.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics; the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics; the Expert Group on Capital Stock Statistics; the Expert Group on Intangibles; the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes; the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation; and the Round Table on Business Survey Frames (E/CN.3/1999/7)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/7/Add.1)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the consultant on the evaluation of the International Comparison Programme (E/CN.3/1999/8)

4. Demographic, social and migration statistics

The Commission will have before it a report containing information on the activities undertaken in support of civil registration with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and on methodological work undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with UNFPA, and the regional commissions related to conducting population and housing censuses in the forthcoming census cycle. In addition, information will be provided on work undertaken in social statistics in the areas of gender, human settlements, criminal justice and international migration statistics, including the publication of *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration Revision 1*.[5] This report is provided to the Commission for information only.

The Commission will also have before it the revised draft principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system, and will be informed of the steps taken for its preparation and the results of the expert group meeting held in New York from 16 to 20 November 1998. The Commission is requested to discuss the draft principles and recommendations and endorse them along with any proposed changes submitted by the Expert Group.

The Commission will also have before it a report by the Siena Group for Social Statistics on its work. The Commission may wish to comment on the objectives of the Group and its proposals for future work.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on progress in demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1999/9)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on the Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System (E/CN.3/1999/10)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/11)

Draft principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev.2)

5. Environment statistics

The Commission will have before it a report, which, in response to the request of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at its thirty-second session (New York, 16–18 June 1998) (see E/CN.3/1999/22, para. 11), describes the nature, scope and sources of environment statistics. It also gives an overview of approaches to data organization, as well as the methodological and data compilation work carried out by various international organizations.

The Commission is requested to (a) comment on the work programmes of international agencies as indicated in the report; and (b) consider the suggestion of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities that the Task Force on Environment Statistics is no longer necessary and that sufficient coordination could be undertaken in the ACC Subcommittee itself (see E/CN.3/1999/22, para. 11(e)).

The Commission will also have before it the report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting; the Commission may wish to comment on the objectives of the Group and its proposals for future work.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on environment statistics (E/CN.3/1999/12)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting (E/CN.3/1999/13)

6. Statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences

The Commission will have before it a report on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system, which addresses two main aspects of the work on indicators. The first relates to the trial compilation of the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division using data available at the international level. The results and lessons learnt from this exercise are discussed. The second aspect concerns the indicator project initiated in 1998 in response to calls from United Nations bodies, such as the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and the Economic and Social Council, for a more coordinated and integrated follow-up to the United Nations conferences. An oral presentation will be made to the Commission on the initial findings and content of the report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in April 1999.

The Commission is requested to: (a) comment on the design of the indicator project with respect to its objectives and outputs, completeness of coverage, including agency and country assessments, and proposed activities; (b) critically assess the activities undertaken and the initial results; and (c) provide guidance on the next steps in the project. The Commission may also wish to review MNSDS in the context of the larger indicator project.

The Commission will also have before it a report on recent developments in the area of poverty statistics prepared by the Convener of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics (Brazil) together with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It presents a summary of activities and main conclusions drawn from two meetings organized by Brazil and ECLAC, respectively. The current status of work is described and proposals for future activities of the Rio Group are put forward. The Commission is invited to comment on the objectives of the Rio Group and on the proposed plan for future action.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system (E/CN.3/1999/14)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report on poverty statistics prepared by the Convener of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (E/CN.3/1999/15)

7. Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments, and to its resolutions

The Statistical Commission's Working Group, in response to the suggestion of the President of the Economic and Social Council, agreed to include in the agenda of the Statistical Commission a standing item entitled "Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments, and to its resolutions" (see E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 26).

The Commission will be informed of the agreed conclusions and resolutions of the Economic and Social Council adopted at its substantive session of 1998 that are relevant to the work of the Commission and any action proposed by the Secretariat. The Commission should decide upon any action that may be necessary.

Documentation

Oral report by the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division

8. International economic and social classifications

The Commission will have before it a report on international economic and social classifications, summarizing the work carried out in response to the recommendations of the Commission concerning international statistical classifications since the twenty-ninth session.[6] It includes an update on the progress in the development and the increased use of the Inventory of Economic and Social Classifications, the United Nations Classifications Registry Database and the Classifications Hotline. Progress in the preparation of a statement of best practices in standard statistical classifications and the preamble will be provided. The main conclusions of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications at its fourth meeting (New York, 2–6 November 1998) will be attached as an annex to the report. The Commission is requested to express its views on (a) the further improvement and use of the Inventory, the Registry Database and the Hotline; (b) the possible implementation by the United Nations Statistics Division of a classifications discussion forum; and (c) the strategy and recommended activities proposed by the Expert Group.

The Commission will also have before it the report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics. The report presents a summary of the accomplishments of the Group regarding CPC and a proposal for the work programme for the Group in the coming three-year period in selected areas. The Commission is invited to comment on the proposed work plan.

The Commission will have before it a report containing an evaluation of the progress in the implementation of ISIC, Revision 3, and CPC, Version 1.0. CPC, Version 1.0 was published in 1998.[7] In this first phase of the evaluation of CPC, the report discusses the mechanisms for implementation and considers whether there are remaining substantive classification issues that need to be addressed. The evaluation of ISIC, Revision 3, assesses the current extent of national implementation, experience of those that have implemented it and barriers to implementation. Actions for further implementation of ISIC, Revision 3, as well as long-term plans for a review of ISIC, are discussed. The report also covers the necessary coordination of the timing of updates and revisions of international economic and social classifications. The Commission may wish to discuss, based on the findings of the evaluation report and the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group on Economic and Social Classifications: (a) recommendations to member States for the implementation and further adaptation of international standard classifications for economic activities and products, namely ISIC and CPC; (b) the shared responsibility of international organizations and countries for commitment of resources for the further widespread implementation of ISIC, Revision 3 and CPC, Version 1.0; (c) the strategy for orchestration and timing of revisions between international and multinational classifications; (d) the formation of an ISIC task force; and (e) the proposed phased evaluation of the use of CPC, with periodic reporting to the Statistical Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on international economic and social classifications (E/CN.3/1999/17)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/18)

Report of the Secretary-General on evaluation of progress in the implementation of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, and the Central Product Classification, Version 1.0 (E/CN.3/1999/16)

9. Technical cooperation

The Commission will have before it a report on some guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics. The report is a result of the Workshop on Improving Technical Cooperation in Statistics, convened by the Government of the Netherlands at Voorburg, the Netherlands, from 8 to 10 September 1997. It is transmitted to the Commission in accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission's Working Group (see E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 31).

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting a report on some guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics, resulting from the Workshop on Improving Technical Cooperation in Statistics (Voorburg, the Netherlands, 8–10 September 1997) (E/CN.3/1999/19)

10. Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes

The Statistical Commission's Working Group held its nineteenth session in New York from 10 to 12 February 1998. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities held its thirty-first session at Geneva from 16 to 18 September 1997, and its thirty-second session in New York from 16 to 18 June 1998. The Commission should take into account, in its discussion under relevant agenda items, the views expressed by its Working Group and by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at those sessions, reports of which are before the Commission. Under this item, the Commission should consider any residual items remaining for consideration from the report of the Working Group; in particular, the Commission should approve the agenda and dates for the twentieth session of the Working Group and the membership of the Working Group, to take effect immediately following the thirtieth session of the Commission (subject to decisions that may be made in relation to the recommendations of the ad hoc group to explore new approaches to the structure and operation of the Commission (see below)).

At its twenty-ninth session, the Commission established an ad hoc group to explore new approaches to the structure and operation of the Statistical Commission.[8] The ad hoc group presented a report on the subject to the Working Group at its nineteenth session, a revised version of which is before the Commission. The views of the Working Group are contained in its report (E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 35). The Commission is requested to consider and, if appropriate, endorse the recommendations of the ad hoc group. The Secretariat has set out its views on the conclusions of the ad hoc group in its report on the global integrated presentation of work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology.

The Statistical Commission's Working Group, when considering the report of the ad hoc group referred to above at its nineteenth session, requested the Secretariat to prepare a report on options for the meetings of the Statistical Commission and the Working Group (E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 35(d)); accordingly, such a report is also before the Commission. The Commission may wish to (a) recommend a draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council establishing annual sessions of the Commission; or (b) alternatively, adopt new terms of reference for the Working Group, delegating additional authority to it.

At its nineteenth session, the Commission endorsed the proposal to develop a pilot integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistics.[9] The United Nations Statistics Division made a presentation to the Working Group of a pilot programme on an integrated presentation of work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology; the Working Group's views are reflected in its report (see E/CN.3/1999/20, paras. 33 and 34). A report on the integrated presentation is before the Commission. In particular, it responds to questions raised by the Working Group and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, and also contains the views of the Secretariat on the report of the ad hoc group to explore new approaches to the structure and operation of the Statistical Commission. The Commission is requested to consider (a) whether the approach to concentrate on methodological work is the correct one; (b) whether to modify the global presentation according to the approach outlined in appendix I of the report of the ad hoc group; (c) whether the United Nations Statistics Division should also develop a Web page of completed methodological work; (d) whether the Division should attempt to organize a cyber expert group; and (e) the criteria that may be used to determine the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission.

At its twenty-ninth session, the Commission welcomed the offer of the Czech Republic to cooperate with a number of other countries and to host a meeting on the topic of best practices for official statistics.[10] A document including the report of the expert group meeting will be before the Commission; the document also contains the cover letter with which the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division disseminated the report of the expert group meeting worldwide. The Commission will also receive an oral report on the outcome of the meeting held in Singapore in January 1999 (see E/CN.3/1999/26) and of proposed next steps. The Commission is requested to review the progress made and make suggestions on the plans for the next steps.

Documentation

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its nineteenth session (E/CN.3/1999/20)*

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-first session (E/CN.3/1999/21)** .

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-second session (E/CN.3/1999/22)***

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ad hoc group established by the Statistical Commission to explore new approaches to its structure and operation (E/CN.3/1999/23)

Report of the Secretary-General on options for the meetings of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination (E/CN.3/1999/24)

Report of the Secretary-General on the global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology (E/CN.3/1999/25)

* The report of the Working Group is also relevant to discussion under agenda items 3–9.

** The report of the Subcommittee is also relevant to discussion under agenda items 3–6 and 11.

*** The report of the Subcommittee is also relevant to discussion under agenda items 3–6.

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Some Best Practices for Official Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/26)

11. United Nations Economic and Social Information System

The Commission will have before it a report on progress and further objectives in the development and implementation of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS), as requested by the Commission's Working Group at its nineteenth session (see E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 36). The report is submitted for information. UNESIS is a comprehensive project of the United Nations Statistics Division to re-engineer its statistical processing and dissemination systems to better meet user demands for more timely and reliable statistics, particularly in electronic formats and through interactive network access. Work on UNESIS includes development of a UNESIS common database for on-line access through the Internet to a large core of harmonized and integrated data and metadata from over 20 sources throughout the United Nations system, to be implemented in 1999.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on draft standards of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System for data structure and metadata in international data exchange and dissemination (E/CN.3/1999/27)

12. The international institute for statistics proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The Commission will have before it a report prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the proposed international institute for statistics. The Commission is requested to provide its views on the proposal.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the proposed international institute for statistics (E/CN.3/1999/28)

13. Programme questions and related matters

The Director of the United Nations Statistics Division will make an oral report on significant developments that have occurred since the various substantive reports for the thirtieth session of the Commission were completed; he will also report on any important developments in the areas not covered in the agenda of the current session.

The Commission will have before it a conference room paper on the draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2000–2001, containing major planned activities and outputs. The Commission is invited to endorse the programme of work.

The Commission will also have before it, for information, a conference room paper containing the draft medium-term plan of the United Nations Statistics Division for the period 1998–2001. It will have been considered by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in 1998. Any changes will be brought to the attention of the Commission.

The Commission will also have before it for information the relevant parts of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997, as well as the relevant comments of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat containing the draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2000–2001 (E/CN.3/1999/CRP.1)

Note by the Secretariat containing the draft medium-term plan of the United Nations Statistics Division for the period 1998–2001 (E/CN.3/1999/CRP.2)

Report of the Secretary-General on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997 (A/53/122 and Add.1) (relevant extract)

Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the first part of its thirty-eighth session (A/53/16, part one) (relevant extract)

14. Provisional agenda and dates for the thirty-first session of the Commission

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the Commission will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its thirty-first session, together with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each item and the legislative authority for their preparation. The Commission will also have before it a proposal for the dates of the thirty-first session.

Documentation

Draft provisional agenda for the thirty-first session of the Commission (E/CN.3/1999/L.3)

15. Report of the Commission on its thirtieth session

The Commission will adopt the report on its thirtieth session, which will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4* (E/1997/24), chap. I.

[2] See Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 84 (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/84) (United Nations publication, forthcoming).

[3] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4* (E/1997/24), para. 39.

[4] Ibid., para. 13 (j)–(l).

[5] Statistical Papers, Series M, No.58, Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14).

[6] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4* (E/1997/24), para. 19.

[7] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 77, Version 1.0 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.5).

[8] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4* (E/1997/24), para. 81 (b).

[9] Ibid., para. 100 (c).

[10] Ibid., para. 13 (a).